

# Lincoln Lore

Bulletin of The Lincoln National Life Foundation . . . Dr. R. Gerald McMurtry, Editor  
Published each month by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1441

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March, 1958

## THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

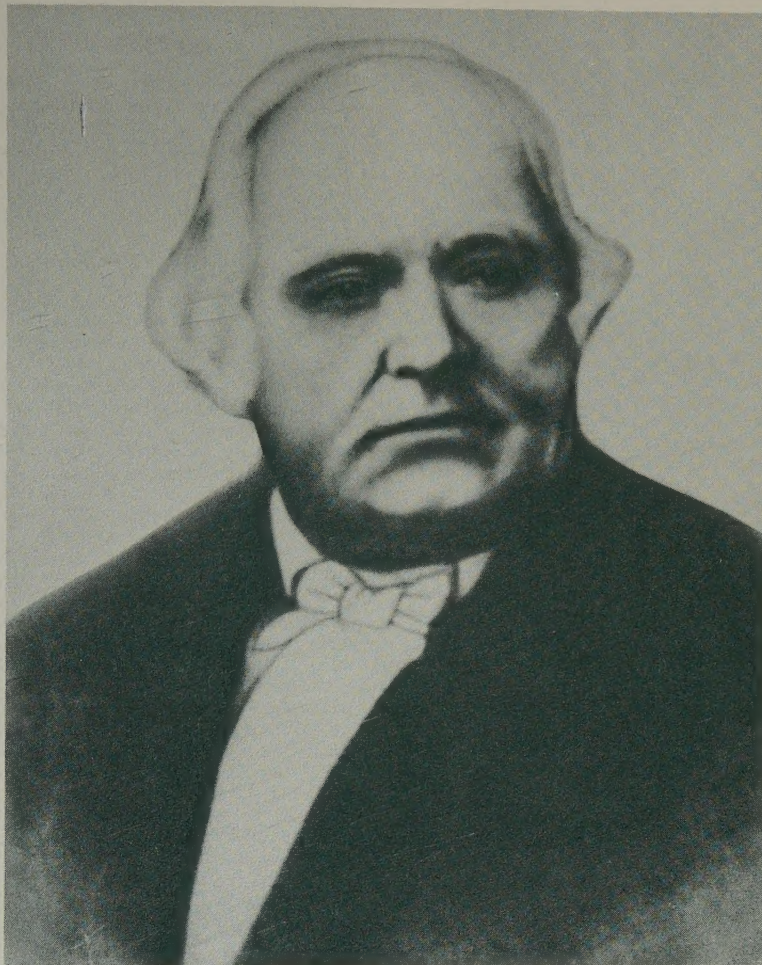
"It is peculiarly the people's department, in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other." — Lincoln

*The Congressional Globe*, May 20, 1862, page 2216, carried the announcement that the President of the United States had approved and signed on the 15th instant "An Act (H. R. No. 269) to establish a Department of Agriculture."

For many years the agricultural interests of the country had been struggling to get adequate recognition of their important business by the government. In cramped quarters they carried on their agricultural research in the Patent Office which was under the supervision of the Department of the Interior. In April 1862, agriculturalists made a determined effort to secure a separate governmental department to be established at the capital.

The general purpose of such a department was "to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people new and valuable seeds and plants."

The Act called on the President, acting with the advice and consent of the Senate, to authorize the appointment of a Commissioner of Agriculture. The salary of the Commissioner was to be \$3,000 per annum. This department head in addition to other duties was charged with the task of keeping statistical records and to make periodic reports on particular subjects whenever he desired or whenever required to do so by the President or either House of Congress.



Isaac Newton, Commissioner of Agriculture  
Photograph secured from the United States Department of Agriculture, Office of Information, Washington 25, D. C.

In the enactment of this legislation a great number of amendments were made to the original resolutions. Some Congressmen opposed the creation of the Department due to financial or bureaucratic reasons, while one or two others professed to see objections based on constitutional questions.

George Washington's name was even introduced into the debates as one who considered agriculture of "primary importance to the country." However, it was Abraham Lincoln's recommendations incorporated in his First Annual Message To Congress, on December 3, 1861, that carried the most authority:

"Agriculture, confessedly the largest interest of the nation, has, not a department, nor a bureau, but a clerkship only, assigned to it in the government. While it is fortunate that this great interest is so independent in its nature as to not have demanded and extorted more from the government, I respectfully ask Congress to consider whether something

more cannot be given voluntarily with general advantage.

"Annual reports exhibiting the condition of our agriculture, commerce, and manufactures would present a fund of information of great practical value to the country. While I make no suggestion as to details, I venture the opinion that an agricultural and statistical bureau might profitably be organized."

Isaac Newton, who was in charge of agricultural activities in the Patent Office in May, 1862, became the

first head of the department with the rank of Commissioner. Newton was born in Burlington County, New Jersey, on March 31, 1800 and after receiving a common school education, he married and settled on a farm in Delaware County, Pennsylvania. Recognized as a model farmer of his state he attended many agricultural association meetings and over a long period of years was active in urging Congress to establish a national department of agriculture.

Newton had brought a plan for a separate department to the attention of Presidents Harrison, Taylor, Fillmore, Buchanan and Lincoln, whose personal acquaintance he enjoyed. Even as a government official he continued to reside on his well stocked Pennsylvania farm and every week he sent fresh butter to the White House.

The Commissioner was a Quaker and Lincoln called him "Friend Newton" when they played chess. Newton is also said to have acted as a temporary banker and household intermediary when Mrs. Lincoln sought his advice regarding excessively large department store accounts she could not pay and which she feared to bring to the attention of the President. Newton, according to one authority, would put up the money to pay the bills, if the accounts were not too large, and later Mrs. Lincoln would repay him. However, if the bills were quite large Newton would intercede with Lincoln in behalf of Mrs. Lincoln.

On one occasion Commissioner Newton accompanied Mrs. Lincoln to Georgetown to see a Mrs. Laury, a spiritualist, who "made wonderful revelations to her about her little son Willy . . . and also about things on the earth."

As an agricultural official Newton had a stormy career. His formal education was limited and his critics claimed that he was practically illiterate and utterly incompetent. Yet Newton is credited with having set into motion a well organized department.

Perhaps the worst charge that can be brought against Newton is that he was a gossip and engaged in cabinet intrigue. As a confidant of Edward Bates, the Attorney General, he was constantly repeating rumors about a remodeling and a rearrangement of the Cabinet. Newton even told Bates in great secrecy "that General Halleck was a confirmed opium-eater." Incidentally, Newton kept Bates well supplied with a good variety of seeds, and the Attorney-General called Newton the "head farmer of the country."

At the time of the establishment of the Department, neither Congress, the President or the Commissioner agreed upon what it should accomplish. To the credit of the Commissioner several capable scientists; Townsend Glover, the entomologist; Charles Wetherill, the chemist; Lewis Bollman, the statistician; and William Saunders, the botanist, were assigned important positions within the experimental and scientific divisions of the Department.

In the administration of the Department it was left to Newton to determine objectives and he directed the varied activities with considerable wisdom and clarity.

One innovation, established by Newton on July 10, 1863, was the issuance of a monthly crop report, and this month and day became the traditional date for the release of this important data.

The Department of Agriculture during the Lincoln Administration labored under trying conditions. The Civil War was being waged, and the farmers were straining their energies to provide food for the army, for export and for civilian needs. Europe leaned heavily at this time upon the United States for its agricultural products and when Newton released his July 10, 1863 crop report he wrote: "The world leans on us. To meet demands of this great magnitude is the mission of American agriculture."

Housed in two basement rooms of the old Patent Office Building Newton gave directions, released statistics, offered encouragement, made predictions, and provided scientific know-how, and the American farmers met the challenge during the war years until final victory was won.

Apparently Lincoln was quite proud of the new Department of Agriculture. In his last annual Message to Congress on December 6, 1864 he said: "The Agricultural Department, under the supervision of its pres-

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## ASTROLOGICAL PREDICTIONS

### Lincoln's Assassination

The "Fate of the Nations" for the spring quarter of 1865 was predicted by the editor of *Broughton's Monthly Planet Reader and Astrological Journal* on page 15 of the April, May & June 1865 issue (vol. 6, no. 2).

The predictions for April 1865 were based on the new moon of March 27th. "Jupiter" was found to be "lord of the scheme and was rising in its own house, in good aspect to Saturn in mid-heaven but in opposition to Mars and Herschel, in the seventh house."

This position was described by Dr. L. D. Broughton, the editor of the New York publication as "uncommonly good for the general government and very evil for the Rebels."

The astrologer also predicted that "They (Rebels) are compelled to retreat, and appear to have got to the very last ditch. Indeed some people will think that it is all up with them. But after the middle of this month the wheel of fortune takes a turn in their favor. But not before they are very near conquered, or exhausted."

Financial concerns were informed that "business of all kinds brighten up in this month and people generally are inclined to look on the bright side of the question, although the public health suffers."

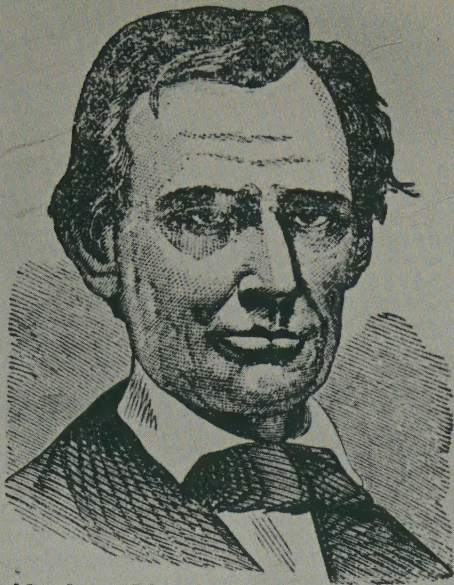
Government officials failed to take seriously, if a copy of this magazine came to their attention, Broughton's prediction that "SOME NOTED GENERAL OR PERSON IN HIGH OFFICE, DIES OR IS REMOVED ABOUT THE 17TH OR 18TH DAY."

Broughton constantly read ominous events in Abraham Lincoln's "nativity." In his October, November and December 1864 issue he reprinted his early (September 1860, vol. 1, no. 6) statement that: "We are sorry to say, that he has some rather unfortunate aspects coming on . . ." The astrologer, however, predicted that Lincoln would win the election because "he has much more favorable planetary influences operating in his Nativity (1864) than he had in the last (1860) . . ."

After the election is over, Broughton made it clear that "Mr. Lincoln will have a number of evil aspects afflicting his Nativity (I do not think that any of them will begin to be felt until the election is past) they will be in operation in Nov. and Dec. of this year. During these months, let him be especially on his guard against attempts to take his life; by such as fire arms, and infernal machines." The astrologer also warned in his article "The Fate Of The Nation" for November 1864, (Oct., Nov. & Dec. 1864, vol. 5, no. 1): "Let the president be careful of secret enemies, and also of assassination, during this and the next months."

Broughton's prediction of Lincoln's assassination and death (April 14-15, 1865) was a vindication for those who looked to the stars for the signs of the times. However, some critics wrote Broughton, who was also plagued at times with evil aspects, that in his prediction of Lincoln's death he should have been more particular and pointed. To these charges the astrological editor cited volume and page where his predictions appeared with the comment that it would be difficult to have a prediction more pointed.

In a re-evaluation of Lincoln's "nativity" the editor, who had made a detailed astrological study of the 16th President, wrote: "Indeed judging from the Map of the Heavens for Mr. Lincoln's time and birth, although he was a quiet inoffensive man, bearing malice to none but charity to all, yet it was next to impossible for him to have died a natural death. At the time of Mr. Lincoln's birth, the Sun and Moon were both under the earth, which causes the ascendant to be the 'giver of life,' and being afflicted by the evil planet Saturn, and Mars and Herschel, both in the eleventh house, denoting him being surrounded by secret enemies and false friends, and had it not been for the Moon being in good aspect to the benevolent planet Jupiter, lord of the ascendant, and of course Mr. Lincoln's significator, which aspect caused him to become popular among people generally, it would have been next to impossible for him to have survived up to the middle of last April. At the time of Mr. Lincoln's death, he had the evil planet Saturn retrograding over Mar's place in the eleventh house, and in evil aspect to the Moon's place, and Mar's in the eighth house, (the



**Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President of the United States. Born February 12th, 1809, 2 h. 0 m. A. M. Died April 15th, 1865, at 7 h 20 m. A. M.**

Some of my friends and correspondents, have written to me saying that the predictions in regard to the death of Abraham Lincoln, should have been more particular and pointed, than was published under the heading, "Fate of the Nation for April 1865." To those who are inclined to find fault with everything which according to their ideas does not appear to come up to the mark, I refer them to the Nativity of Abraham Lincoln, as published in the Oct., Nov. and Dec. No. for 1864, on page 2d, they will find the following paragraph;

But I might here state, that shortly after the election is over, Mr. Lincoln will have a number of evil aspects afflicting his nativity. (I do not think that any of them will begin to be felt until after the election is past.) they will be in operation in Nov. and Dec. of this year. During those months, let him be especially on his guard against attempts to take his life; by such as fire arms, and infernal machines.

Also in the same No. under the heading "Fate of the Nation for 1864," they may find the following sentence;

Let the President be careful of secret enemies, and also of assassination, during this and the next months.

It would be difficult to have a prediction more pointed than the above. It is true that I only mentioned it in a rather careless manner in the predictions for the "Fate of the Nation for April, 1865," by stating that some noted general, or person in high office, dies or is removed, about the 17th, or 18th day."

Although I made the predictions about attempts being made to take the President's life; by such as fire arms, &c. some months before it really took place, yet as I stated in Lincoln's Nativity, in the Oct., Nov. and Dec., No. 1864

that shortly after the election is over, Mr. Lincoln will have a number of evil aspects afflicting his Nativity; and of course those evil influences would last through several months.

With Lincoln's tragic death a matter of history, Dr. Broughton announced in his July, Aug. & Sept. 1865 issue that he had "intended to publish the nativity of Andrew Johnson, President of the U. S. But for want of room must defer it to the next no."

To give the reader some idea of what to expect, the editor continued the announcement: "I might here state that in some respects he (Johnson) has a very remarkable Nativity. Yet he will have no easy time of it during the period he is in office. From the first of July to the first of Aug. he will have some very evil aspects that will affect his health. But from the 9th of Sept. to the middle of Dec. will be an uncommonly evil period for him; difficulties will surround him; but I am in hopes that his life will be spared. But more of this in my next issue."

Note: See *Lincoln Lore*, Number 1433, July, 1957 for "Astrological Predictions—The Presidential Campaign of 1860."

## AGRICULTURE

(Continued from page 1)

ent energetic and faithful head, is rapidly commending itself to the great and vital interest it was created to advance. It is peculiarly the people's department, in which they feel more directly concerned than in any other, I commend it to the continued attention and fostering care of Congress."

One day in June 1866, when a thunderstorm was heard approaching the capital city, Commissioner Newton remembered that a certain variety of wheat samples had not been cut. Leaving his office on this sultry, hot day and likely wearing a silk hat and frock coat he went to the experimental farm, near the present Bureau of Engraving and Printing to supervise the cutting of the wheat samples before the rain. The wheat samples were likely rescued before the storm, but not before Newton suffered a sunstroke.

The first Commissioner of Agriculture, the originator of the Department's world-famous crop reports, and many other commendable and scientific services, died on June 19, 1867.

## CURIOSITIES OF LETTERS

### (Presidential Campaign of 1864)

To the Editors of the Evening Post:

There are seven letters in Mr. Lincoln's name. There are nine in McClellan's and nine in Pendleton's. Words containing similar numbers of letters happen to illustrate the platforms upon which the candidates stand—thus:—

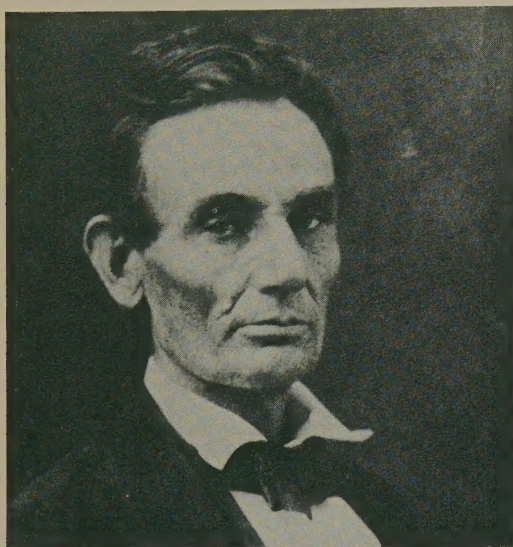
|                                               |             |
|-----------------------------------------------|-------------|
|                                               | LINCOLN     |
| fights in the spirit of                       | LIBERTY     |
| to establish                                  | JUSTICE     |
| and ensure universal                          | FREEDOM     |
|                                               | McCLELLAN   |
| and                                           | PENDLETON   |
| with a                                        | COWARDICE   |
| which is disgraceful to Americans, strengthen | SECESSION   |
| and encourage the                             | REBELLION   |
| by advocating a                               | SURRENDER   |
| to                                            | JEFF. DAVIS |
| SEVEN is the sacred number!                   |             |

*Albany Journal*  
Friday, November 11, 1864

Broughton's Monthly Planet Reader and Astrological Journal. July, Aug. & Sept. 1865. Vol. 6, No. 3, Pages 23-24.

house of death) just passing an evil aspect of Venus, lady of the eleventh, (the house of friends) all of which would indicate, that near the middle of April he would meet with some great evil, from false friends or secret enemies."

## FASSETT'S PHOTOGRAPH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN



From the Meserve Collection  
Abraham Lincoln

A photograph (M 8) made by S. M. Fassett

One of the best beardless photographs of Abraham Lincoln was made by S. M. Fassett in Chicago in October, 1859. For many years it (Meserve No. 8) was attributed to be the work of Alexander Hesler of Chicago. Truman H. Bartlett of Boston stated in 1910 that "Hesler . . . took this photograph in 1858."

The following statement and letter taken from the *Chicago Tribune* of April 26, 1865 established without a doubt, the time, the place and the name of the photographer whose print "Mrs. Lincoln . . . pronounced the best likeness she had ever seen of her husband:"

"Among the most reliable and life-like portraits of our illustrious departed President ever published, are from the negative made in 1859 by Mr. F., before Mr. Lincoln's name had been mentioned in connection with the Presidency.

"The following letter from our well-known townsman D. B. Cooke, kindly furnished, will explain the circumstances under which the picture was taken, and will doubtless be of interest to our readers:

"Nos. 39 and 41 Lake Street,  
"Chicago, April 25, 1865.

"S. M. Fassett, Esq.:

"Dear Sir: Little thought we, in October, 1859, when, at my solicitation, Abraham Lincoln visited with me your gallery, for the purpose of sitting for his photograph, what a value five years would give to the picture!

"The original picture is now in my possession, and the duplicate which you sent by me to Mrs. Lincoln she pronounced the best likeness she had ever seen of her husband.

"It shows him as he was, previous to his first nomination, and just as his old friends remember him. Consequently, no recent picture can be so valuable to many; and the public ought to be truly grateful that you have preserved the negative with such care. There are so many caricatures of Mr. Lincoln in circulation, that a reliable portrait is *invaluable*, and should adorn every house in the land."

The Lincoln National Life Foundation has in its collection one of the Fassett prints from the original negative. The back of this photograph bears a penciled inscription: "Cook & Fassett, Photographers, 1860."

## "A LIE WITH CIRCUMSTANCE"

The *Chicago Inter-Ocean* of February 20, 1878 carried a sensational news story concerning the celebrated and eccentric Swedish author Almquist. The story had its origin in an issue of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which published the erroneous statement that Almquist was appointed secretary to Abraham Lincoln.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* sketch follows: "Suddenly all minor criticism was silenced by the astounding news that Almquist, convicted of forgery, and charged with murder, had fled from Sweden. This occurred in 1851. For many years no more was heard of him; but it was known that he went over to America, and, under a feigned name, succeeded in being appointed secretary to Abraham Lincoln. After Lincoln's death, Almquist again fell under the ban of the law. His MSS., including several unprinted novels, were confiscated and destroyed, but he himself escaped to Europe, where under another alias, he continued to exist a short time longer. His strange and sinister existence came to a close at Bremen, in 1866. It is by his romances, undoubtedly the best in Swedish, that his literary fame will mainly be supported; but his singular history will always point him out as a remarkable figure, even when his works are no longer read. He was another Eugene Aram, but of greater genius, and so far more successful that he escaped the judicial penalty of his crime."

The *New York Mail* in its issue of Tuesday, February 26, 1878 asked these questions: ". . . did Lincoln ever have a Secretary answering to the description given above, and if he did, what was the Secretary's name?" The editorial comment was; "Here is a chance to add an interesting chapter to a romantic life-history, or to prove that on rare occasions even the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* can depart from the exact line of sober fact."

The newspaper reporter, even as he propounded questions, already had the answers. Mr. John G. Nicolay, the Clerk of the United States Supreme Court, who was Mr. Lincoln's private secretary from the time of the latter's nomination until just before the assassination was called upon to refute the statement of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

On February 24, 1878 Nicolay wrote as follows: "I have examined the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the Library of Congress here, and find the statement printed therein as alleged. I cannot imagine how the editors of that standard work could have been imposed upon by such a story. President Lincoln never had such a secretary, and no person ever stood in any relation to him who, by the wildest stretch of imagination, could be held to answer such a description. Upon inspection you will see that the allegation substantially confutes itself. 'Almquist' is said to have been born in 1793, and was therefore, when Mr. Lincoln became President, already burdened with sixty-eight years. The assertion that Mr. Lincoln employed an alien, a fugitive, a criminal and almost a septuagenarian as a secretary, in war times, is not only utterly untrue, but in the light of the President's characteristics, and of American custom and habits, palpably absurd."

The *New York Mail* article of February 26, 1878 was concluded with this statement: "Now it remains for the editors and publishers of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to explain the matter from their standpoint, or stand confessed as columniators of President Lincoln and the American people."

## WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN

Rev. Dr. Putnam of Roxbury, in his Fast Day sermon, in alluding to President Lincoln, expressed the belief that he would hereafter be associated in history with the first President of the United States. Washington, by universal consent, was called the "Father of his Country." Mr. Lincoln, he thought, would popularly be regarded as the "Savior of his country."

*Boston Evening Transcript*  
April 15, 1865